

SOLDIER FOR PEACE

A BIOGRAPHY OF OUR TIME

re: A subject to research for 2 one-hour documentary films.

War can lead to isolation, madness and death, even when the fighting has stopped. Some war veterans think that those killed in action were better off. Others find that in order to find peace in yourself, you have to fight for peace in the world. This film is about a Vietnam vet from Quebec who believes that unless you work for peace, you are condemned to a living death.

Pierre Blais grew up in Montréal in the fifties and sixties, when a gifted small-fry who had to use his fists to survive in a bi-racial community could identify with the burgeoning independence movement of Quebec. When he was 17, he spent several months in prison for stealing dynamite that was intended for use in the blowing up of the royal yacht Britannica when it was docked in Quebec city.

But problems with his parents and with girls turned his eyes to the more glamorous action then taking place in south-east Asia. At the age of 19, he went to Plattsburgh, N.Y. to enlist with the U.S. Infantry. He became one of the approximately 40,000 Canadians who fought in Vietnam, 10,000 of whom were from Quebec.

After 18 months of hell, he returned to Montréal with a Bronze Medal of Honor with "V" for Valour, but alienated more than ever both from himself and from Quebec society. 1969 and 1970 were the exploding years of the Quebec Independence Movement, but Pierre allowed himself to be caught up in the drug scene on the McGill campus. Ripe for salvation, he was plucked by a Mormon missionary, and went to study Asian culture and computer science at Brigham Young University in Salt Lake City Utah.

At Brigham Young University, Pierre was persuaded that his role as a Mormon in "America's prophetic destiny" was to specialize in artificial intelligence, and to put his training at the service of the CIA. Married to a Japanese woman from Okinawa, a fellow Mormon, he got a job working for the Agency in Virginia. There he established a home for his family of three little girls.

Stability began to crumble in the early eighties, when he became aware that the CIA was working to de-stabilize the Sandinista regime, and that the Reagan administration might try to cure the Vietnam syndrome by invading Nicaragua. He made contact with the Vietnam veterans peace movement, and started to undergo the biggest change of his life.

Six years later, he has yet to work his way through it. It has cost him his career in artificial intelligence, his spiritual bearings in an established religion, and his family life. He lives by himself in a small trailer on a friend's farm near San Francisco. He buys his supplies with his veteran's pension, and is trying to make sense out of his life by developing a friendship with an Apache shaman, by participating in Vietnam veterans peace actions, and by writing an auto-biography in which he intends to expose all he knows about how the U.S. military and intelligence networks operate.

He stays in California to be near his children, but he will not feel he has come to terms with himself until he makes peace with the people of Vietnam and with his parents in Montréal. He holds the latter partly responsible for the crimes he committed against the former. He sees his parents twice a year when he comes to Montréal to consult with his publisher.

The film would examine two questions: (1) how a French Canadian with a classical education and a liberal-nationalist background got to spend 15 years of his productive life in the service of the U.S. military-intelligence establishment, and (2) how he got out of it and turned into a born-again pacifist.

There would be three main locations - San Francisco, Montréal and Song Bé province in south Vietnam, where Pierre did most of his fighting. Other characters in the film will include:

Indio Salazar Pierre's shaman, an Apache Indian who went AWOL from the U.S. Marines in 1959 to fight with Fidel Castro in the Cuban Revolution. Pulled off many successful bank hold-ups in the south-west U.S. to finance gun-running for the Cuban rebels. Spent time in Alcatraz, situated on "the rock" in San Francisco Bay which is holy ground to native Americans. Believes his prayers there helped get the notorious pen closed. Plans to open a "survival camp" for peace activists on the desert near Big Mountain, Arizona - another holy ground for native americans, and the site of rich coal and uranium deposits which big mining companies are threatening to open up.

Lynn Jenson a proposal engineer at Northrop, one of the biggest U.S. aerospace corporations, located in the celebrated Silicon Valley outside San Francisco. A Mormon with a rare critical conscience. Pierre's best friend at Brigham Young University, and still an intellectual sparring partner. A highly cultured man whose teen-age daughter is a painter with considerable promise.

Brian Willson a leader of Vietnam veterans for Peace who became a public figure in 1987 when he lost two legs trying to blockade a train pulling out of the Concord naval weapons base near San Francisco. It was loaded with arms for the Contras. Pierre witnessed the tragedy. Willson's wife Holly is a mid-wife who has taught natural home-birth in Nicaragua. Their teen-age son Gabriel, deeply disturbed by his father's experience, is incarcerated in a drug-treatment centre in San Francisco.

Roger Blais Pierre's father. He was first "chef de l'équipe française" at the National Film Board, and a card-playing friend of René Lévesque, who sat next to him at the founding convention of the Parti Québécois. Roger believes he was surveilled by the RCMP in those days. His best-known film is a biography of John Grierson, produced by the NFB in 1973. Now retired, he remains active as a communications consultant. He still lives with Pierre's mother Louise in their home in suburban Montréal where Pierre spent his troubled youth.

Yvon Roy Native of Sherbrooke Quebec, with degrees in law and business administration. Joined U.S. Green Berets in 1964, and led secret military missions in Cambodia and Laos from 1969 to 1971, when the U.S. officially had no troops in those countries. Returned to civilian life in 1975, and started doing under-cover work for the Green Berets in Quebec. Had a falling out with them in 1987 and has decided to tell his story. Spends much of his time in hospital being treated for war wounds in the abdomen. Has two sons in the U.S. army, one of whom was severely wounded in the recent invasion of Panama.

Three million men fought in Vietnam on the American side. Fifty five thousand died in action, and another seventy thousand in acts of self destruction on their return home. Like most veterans, Pierre at first

buttoned up his coat of experience, not aware of the enemy within. What is unusual about his story is that he finally did recognize it, fifteen years later, and is still suffering the consequences of coming to terms with it. The film will show how making peace can be as big a challenge as going to war.